for the promotion of ties in the hydrocarbon sector. Again, China and India had considerable experience in the energy sector and had good human resource and technical capabilities, all of which taken together would make combined India-China bids for oil and gas assets very competitive in the global energy market. Both Indian and Chinese companeis have been pursuing proposals for equity participation in producing fields in different parts of the world. Their bids for such proposals are based on their own assessment of the potential value of the oil and gas reserves in the proposal concerned. In some cases, the Chinese companies pursuing specific proposals have succeeded in acquiring certain assets on the basis of bids that the Indian companies believed were much too high for the property concerned, and hence preferred to withdraw from the competitive bidding.

At present, National Oil Companies *viz.* ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL), GAIL (India) Ltd. (GAIL), Oil India Ltd. (OIL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleurn Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) are in touch with Chinese petroleum companies to enter into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for co-operation in the hydrocarbon sector.

The proposed cooperation will cover both upstream and downstream sector in both countries as also joint bids in third countries, particularly in Central Asia, West Asia and the Gulf, West Africa and Latin America.

GAIL and HPCL joint venture

2215. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that GAIL and HPCL have formed a joint venture for oil exploration abroad;

(b) the details thereof and the reasons for this major diversification; and

(c) whether these two companies have made bids in foreign countries also and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKARAIYAR): (a) and (b) On the 16th November2005,

GAiL (India) Limited (GAIL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly identify and pursue Oil, Gas, Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India and abroad. This is expected to meet the strategic needs of both companies. The scope of the MoU includes the following:

(i) Prepare a 'Blue Print for E&P business in India and Overseas.

(ii) Identify and evaluate business opportunities in E&P related sectors in India and countries in West Asia, South Asia, Africa and- other regions of interest.

(iii) Joint bidding for Blocks in NELP, CBM Bidding Rounds in India and abroad;

(iv) Jointly explore possibilities for farm-in option in already awarded exploration blocks in India and abroad;

(c) Although, no bid has been submitted till date by the GAIL & HPCL consortium for any exploration & production blocks, GAIL have recently bid for exploration blocks in Australia along with Prize Petroleum, a JV of HPCL, ICICI, OILEX NL and GSPC.

Murder of IOC official

2216. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD:

SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a manager of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) posted at Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh was murdered for doing this duty honestly in the later half of November, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there are instances of selling adulterated fuel and the officer concerned had ordered closure of some IOC dealer petrol pumps in Lakhimpur;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and